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Palestinians — How Invaders Became Indigenous



According to the anti-Zionist narrative, the Palestinians are the residents who have always lived in “historic Palestine”, they were the Canaanites, Philistines, Jebusites and even the ancient Israelites who in the Byzantine period converted to Christianity and in the Islamic period and converted to Islam.





How true is this narrative?

The myth of Islamization

There is no evidence that there was mass Islamization, neither of Jews nor Christians.

According to a study by [Milka Levy-Rubin](#),

There is limited evidence for the conversion of the Samaritans, but as for the rest:

“As of now, **this is the only evidence we have of mass conversion to Islam** in Palestine during the early Muslim period. It should be emphasized that **this evidence cannot** be applied automatically to the Jewish and Christian communities in Palestine whose circumstances, though similar, were nevertheless somewhat different.”

Until the middle of the 20th-century scholars believed that under the Arabic-Muslim rule a great number of the local population converted to Islam because of the non-Muslim Poll tax. Daniel C. Dennet proved that this was not the case in his study, “Conversion and The Poll Tax in the Early Islam”, 1950. The issue was discussed in Michael G. Motony article, “The Age of Conversion: A Reassessment,” in Michael Gervers & Ramzi J. Bikhazi, eds, Conversion and Continuity, pp. 135–145.

Robert Bulliet of the University of Columbia, study, Conversion to Islam in the Medieval Period, 1979, concluded that only about 10% of the Christian population converted to Islam during the Arabic- Islamic occupation (640–1099). Since they did not convert during the Crusaders occupation, they still were the largest ethnic-religious group at the Mamluk conquest. (see, Chapters 3–5).

Robert Schick, from the Palestinian University of Al Quds in east Jerusalem, published a study, The Christian communities of Palestine from Byzantine to Islamic Rule, 1995 (unfortunately, the study only covers the period up to the 9th century CE). Schick showed that Christians were not persecuted during the Arabic occupation, and conversion to Islam was rare, although some churches were converted to mosques and the repair of the rest was restricted.





Islam in Syria and Palestine and the Survival of Christian Communities,” in Nehemia Levtzion, *Islam in Africa and the Middle East*, 2007):

Stage one — from 640 to 750, under the Umayyad rule, no efforts were made to force Islamization, except for a short period under the Caliph Ibn Abd El Aziz (717–720). Few converted to out of personal interests.

Stage Two — from 750 to 1099. During the Abbasside period, under the Caliph Al-Mutwakkil (861–847) the “Omar Laws “ were more carefully enforced due to the growth of influence of the religious leaders. During the rule of the Caliph Al-Hakim (996–1021), of the Fatimid House (942–1099), non- Muslims were forced to convert or leave the country. Some Christians converted, or left or became Muslims only officially. The decision was cancelled after a short time.

About 50% converted until the 11th century.

Stage Three- the 13th and 14th centuries. Under the Mamluk rule (1260–1516) Christians were persecuted, their churches were destroyed, their property destroyed and many were killed. Some of the survivors converted. There is no information on It is widely believed today that there was no widespread conversion of Jews to Islam. Since 1918, and more so since 1967, many studies on this subject were published, and most scholars reject the idea that conversion was widespread, although individual cases of conversion are known.

Prof Shlomo Dov Goytin based much of his research “Mediterranean Society” on the collection of letters from the Cairo Genizah dated to the 11th — 13th centuries. He determined that “conversion to Islam was not common during the classical period of the Genizah, and therefore we hear very little about inheritances of Jews who converted” (p. 520). Prof Goytin quoted a letter from the Genizah telling of Jews who were forced to convert while others preferred death or exile to Byzantium, Yemen, or other countries”. The letter referred to the conversion decree during the reign of the Caliph Al Hakkim.





reason or another, that they would benefit more from joining the ruling faith. But Prof Goytin noted that this was not typical of Jews in Israel but rather of “people who were living in a foreign land and so were uprooted from their regular environment” (p. 379). According to Genizah documents many converts did not sever their ties to their former religion and it was usually difficult for a convert to enter Muslim society.

Prof Levtzion concluded that “the Jews held on to their faith and only a few converted to Islam” (p. 248). The converts converted not so much from spiritual attraction to Islam but more from fear or for benefit. He believes that the demise of community organisation and leadership did not take place among the Jews as it did in the Christian communities. The strength of the community was the main reason for the psychological strength of the Jews. The community continued to offer its services. Very few cases of conversion are recorded in the Genizah documents between the 10th and 12th centuries.

Prof H. H. Ben Sasson determined in his book “History of the People of Israel during the Middle Ages” that “the vast majority of the Jewish people under Muslim rule held fast to their faith” (p. 33).

Prof Moshe Gil is also of the opinion that there was no mass conversion of Jews under Muslim rule. Although Omar’s Laws turned the Jews, along with other non-believers, into second class citizens, “there is no mention in the Jewish, Christian, or Muslim sources of mass conversion of Jews to Islam at any time or place” (p. 49).

Genizah 11th century documents list Jewish settlements in the Galilee in the 11th century, i.e., at the end of the Arabic occupation. Mordekhai Avi’am’s archaeological survey also confirms that during the Crusader period there were still at least 36 Jewish settlements in the Galilee. Prof Gil wrote that despite the difficult conditions of the Jewish population during the Arab-Muslim period, the Genizah letters describe “the continued existence of Jewish settlement since time immemorial”. There is no evidence of conversion. Jewish settlements survived the Arabic period very much thanks to their community organisation. The community formed the main barrier against assimilation.





Dr Milka Levi-Rubin, in a lecture to students, confirmed there were few cases of conversion to Islam among Jews.

Dr A. Y. Braver, in his article “The Jewish Element among Arabs in Israel”, rejected the idea that the Jews converted to Islam and determined that “anyone claiming it [the Jewish people] converted for the benefit of material gain is defaming its memory, is wrong and misleading” (p. 424)

So in conclusion, the research consensus is that there was no mass conversion to Islam of Christians and Jews.

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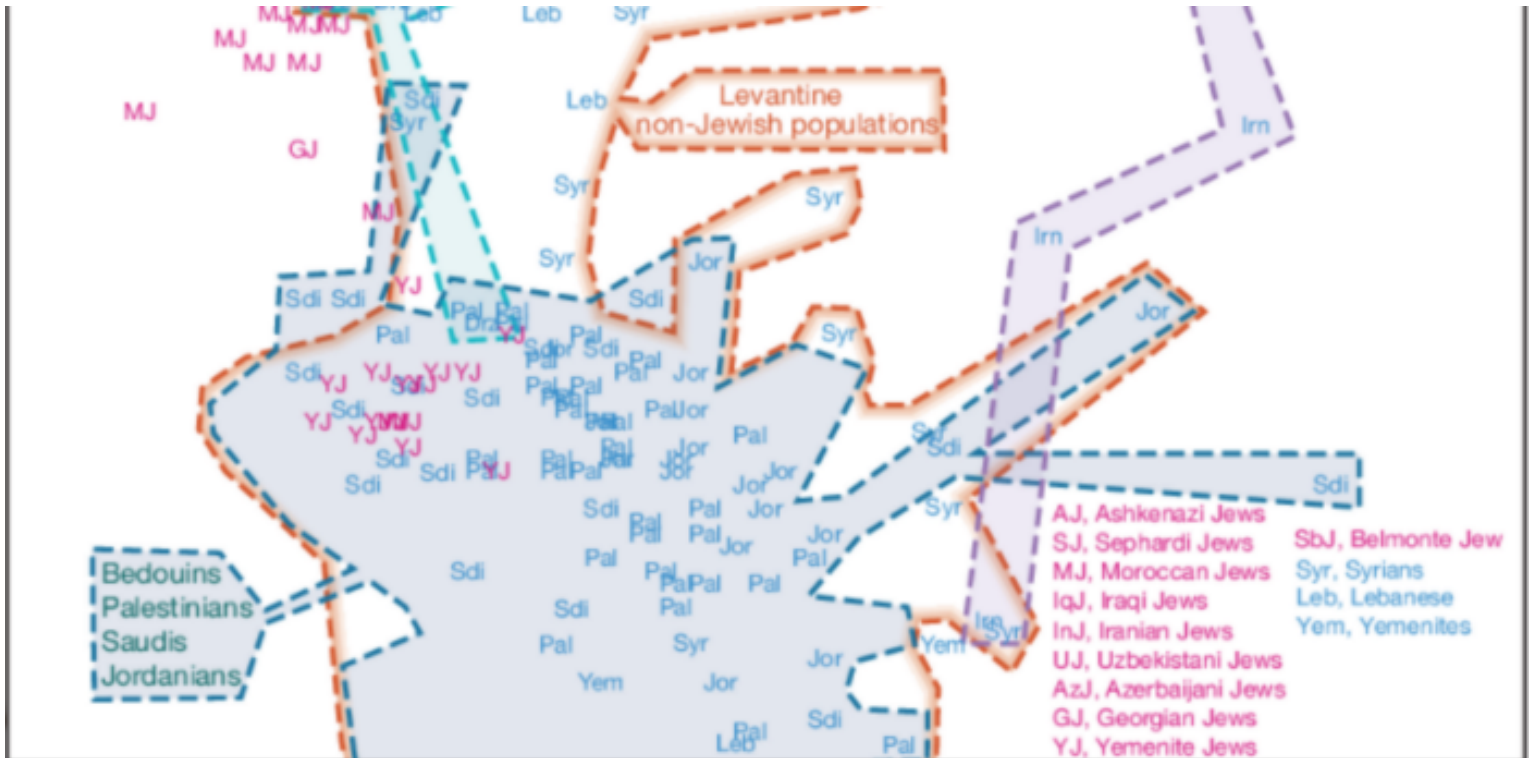
Lammens, H., La Syria, pp. 7–120.





“Palestinian Arabs and Bedouin differed from the other Middle Eastern populations studied here, mainly in specific high-frequency Eu 10 haplotypes not found in the non-Arab groups. These chromosomes might have been introduced through migrations from the Arabian Peninsula during the last two millennia.”

Studies show that Palestinians are genetically closer to Saudi Arabia than to the Levant:

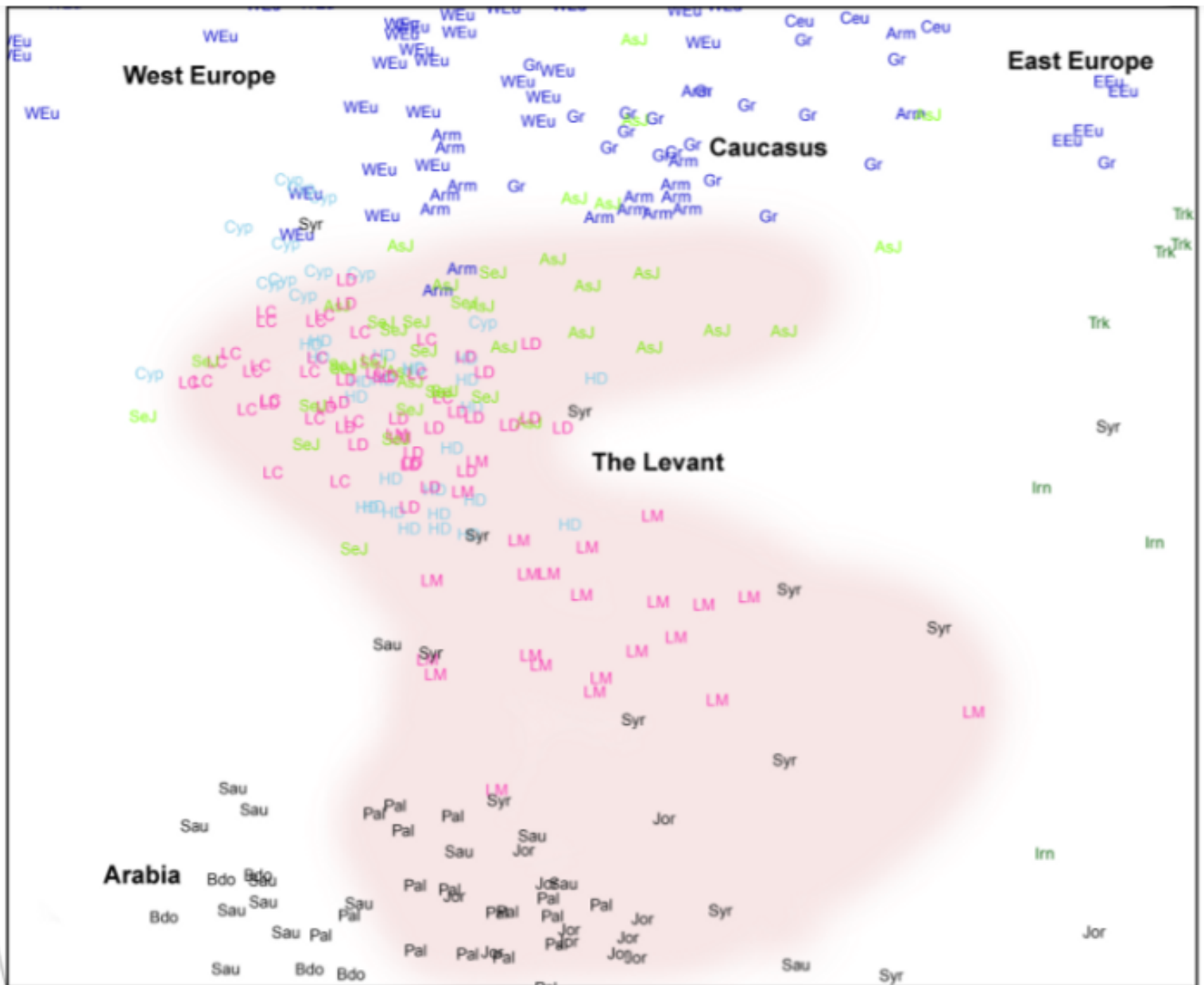


link: <https://www.semanticscholar.org/paper/The-genome-wide-structure-of-the-Jewish-people-Behar-Yunusbayev/5abdb3ddc598336d89967f84e12779f493d28ba6/figure/0>



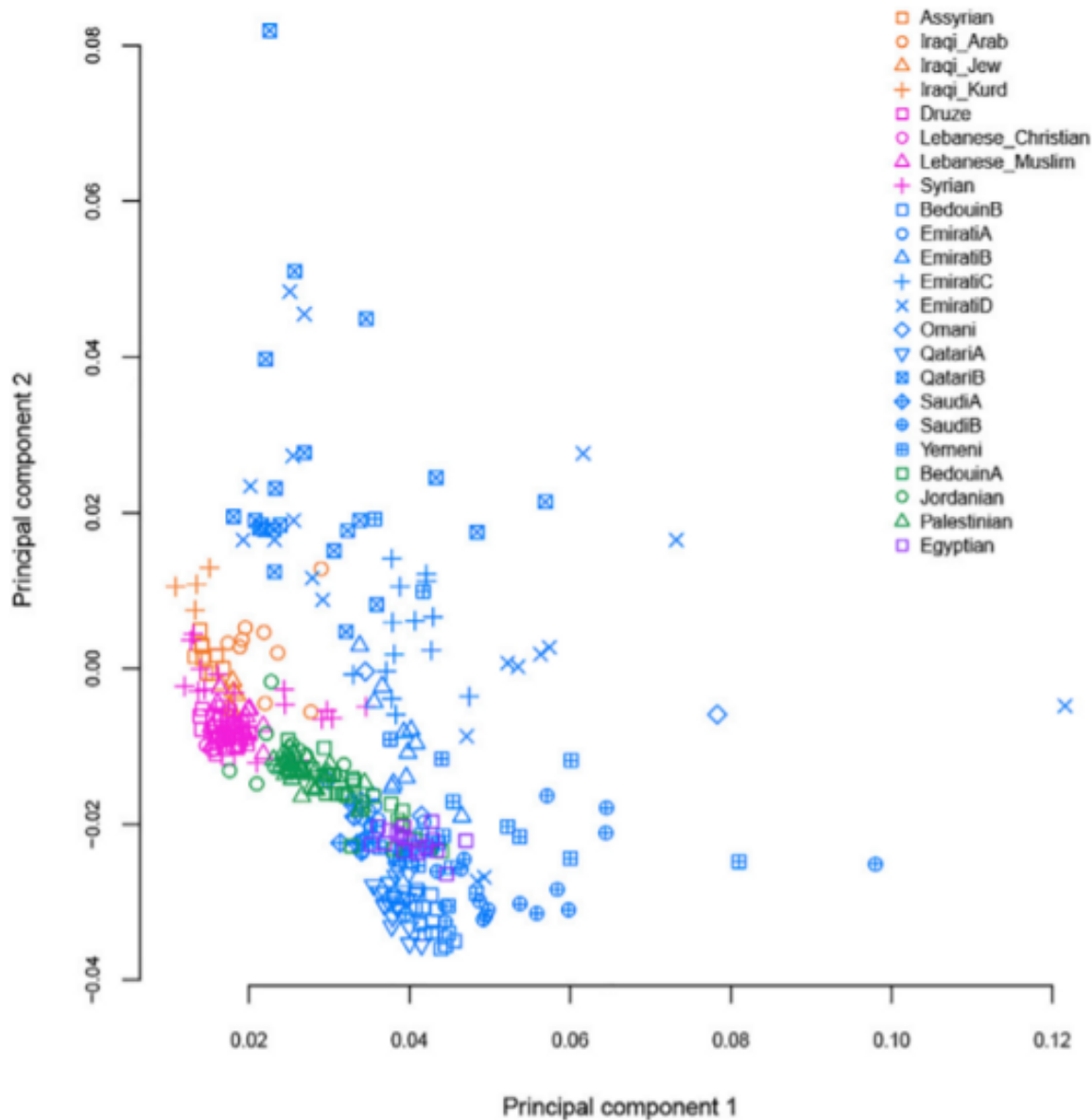
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The Demographics of Palestine

The following data is based on Rivka Shpak Lissak book “When and How the Arabs and Muslims Immigrated to the Land of Israel” details the migration of various groups to Palestine that have become in recent centuries, especially in the years 1830–1947

During the Byzantine period (4th to 7th centuries), Eastern Orthodox Christians were the majority of the Land of Israel’s population, with Jewish and Samaritan minorities.

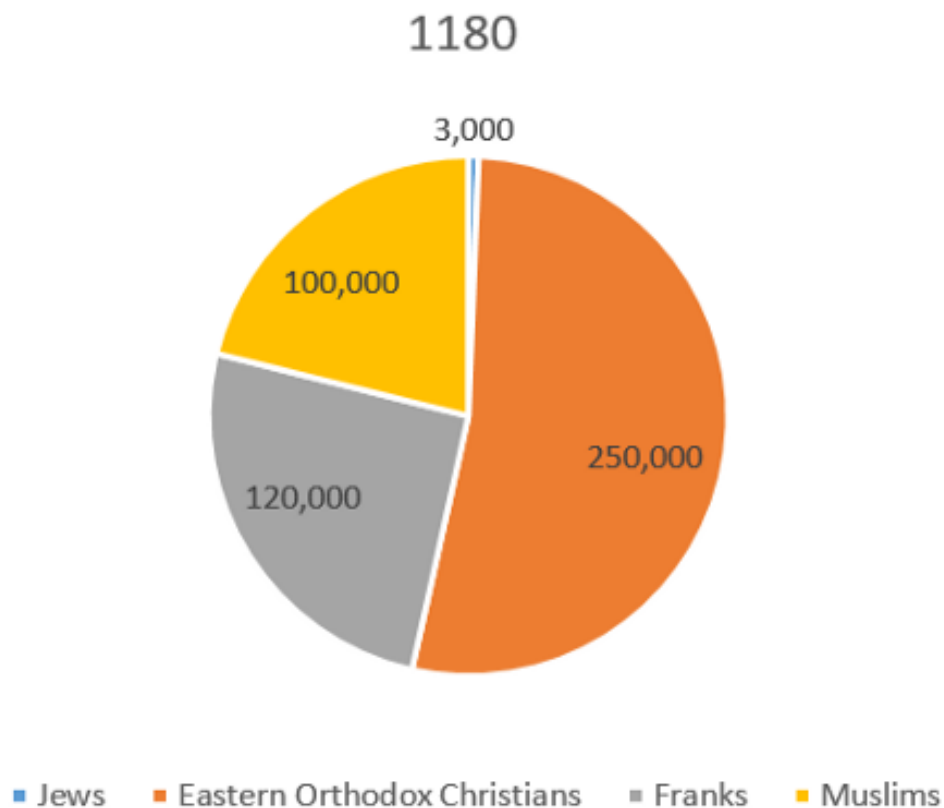




The Eastern Christians continued to be the majority during the Arab-Muslim period, and, joined by Franks, were still the majority during the Crusader period: There were 100,000 to 120,000 Franks, and the Eastern Orthodox Christians numbered approximately 200,000 to 250,000. No data exist for the number of Jews and Samaritans — the Samaritan population declined while the Jewish population declined and then increased, but both communities remained small.

After centuries of Islamic repression and massacres of the Crusaders, the Jewish population was reduced to a few thousand

The Population of the Land of Israel under Crusader Rule



Of a population of 470,000 at the end of the Crusader period, 100,000–120,000 Franks and about 50,000 Eastern Orthodox Christians (from the coastal cities) were killed, murdered, or fled. Not including casualties in other cities, the population at the time of the Mamluk conquest was about 300,000.

In the 14th century, Muslims became the majority for the first time.



the Immigration

Arabs penetrated into the land of Israel (the ancient name of Palestine) in 4 waves

First Wave(7TH Century)

The first wave was after the occupation of the country by the Arabs in the 7th century A.D. The Arab — Muslim occupation of Palestine lasted about 400 years (640–1099). Most scholars agree that the ethnic- religious structure of the population remained essentially unchanged from the days of the Byzantine occupation (324CE — 640CE), and the majority of the population consisted of Greek Orthodox Christians and 2 minorities: Jews and Samaritans. The number of Arabs settled in Palestine was negligible.

The Muslim army emerging from the Arabian Peninsula was comprised of Bedouin warriors who moved along with their families and flocks. Prof Moshe Sharon, rejects the theory that the 7th century Arabic conquest was immediately accompanied by massive Arabic settlement in the country. He gives several reasons for the absence of massive Arabic penetration into the Land of Israel prior to the 9th century:

I. Umayyad policies (640–750CE) prevented Bedouins from entering the country. The ruling Umayyad dynasty's interest was to maintain the existing administrative and economic systems and to keep the peasant population on the land. Regional governors appointed by the Umayyad took pains to prevent the entry of Bedouins into settled areas. The Christian traveler Arkulfus who traveled the country in 670CE, shortly after the Arabic conquest, described it as densely populated with Christians from Jerusalem to the Galilee. Umayyad rulers signed treaties with the Christian and Jewish populations and promised to secure their lives and property. They kept in place the Christian administrators and Greek continued to be the administrative language until the 8th century, and in some places to the beginning of the 9th century.

II. The conquering army continued on to new conquests

Bedouin warriors did not settle on the land because they continued to advance towards





of Israel, that the conquest thrust could not spare forces for settlement. The Arabs' system was to establish cities in the conquered areas that served as military bases from where warriors emerged to conquer the surrounding areas. Israel is the only country where no such cities were built: Ramle was the only city built by the Arabs, in 711CE, nearly 100 years after the conquest. It was not a military base but an administrative center which replaced Caesarea as the capital of the Byzantine Palestina-Prima district. Sharon emphasizes that Arabs comprised a negligible minority in Ramle's population. The Arabic geographer Al Ya'akubi wrote that Ramle's population was mixed, and comprised mostly of Samaritans and Jews.

III. Preference for living in the periphery of settled areas

As the Bedouin warriors at that time were nomads, those who reached Israel were not interested in urban or agrarian life and preferred to live as nomads on the border of the settled region rather than within it. Furthermore, the settled regions were under the protection of the rulers. The Umayyad Caliphs themselves constructed their palaces on the border of the desert — for example, the Hisham palace near Jericho. Prof. Nehemia Levtzion, in book, *Islam, an Introduction to the Religion's History*, wrote that the Arabs tended to segregate themselves, maintain their tribal social structure and nomadic life style, and did not settle in the populated region.

Hasson lists in his article, "The Spread of Arabic Tribes in the Land of Israel during the First Century of the Hajjara (7th Century)." additional reasons for warriors avoiding the settled regions:

I. Fear of disease — the epidemic that broke out in the country in 639 resulted in the death of many warriors (some estimate as many as 25,000 died) including Muhammad's cousin and commanders of the Arab army.

II. Absence of empty space — the Umayyad did not exile the local population. Only the Byzantine aristocracy and military fled the country, and, according to some historians, the Greek-Christian urban upper classes left as well.

Hasson notes one exception: Bedouins settled in Tiberias and Beth Shean. Arabs





The surrender agreements of Beth Shean and Tiberias mention the transfer of 50% of the houses to Arabs.

At the end of the 7th century or the beginning of the 8th, a decision was made to also settle Muslims in the coastal cities of Ashkelon, Acre, Caesarea, and Tyre, to protect the country against Byzantine attacks from the sea. In his article “The Cities of the Land of Israel under Muslim Rule”, Prof Moshe Sharon points out that the Bedouin warriors were fearful of the sea and refused to settle along the coast despite being offered land in return, and therefore Muslim Persians were sent there to settle.

An Arabic 9th century source attests to the composition of the coastal cities population, which included Jews, Samaritans, Persians, Greeks, and a few Arabs.

At a later stage, soldiers released from the Caliph’s Muslim army settled in villages and towns that had been deserted by Christians fleeing ahead of the Arab conquerors, but no numerical data is available.

In summary, Umayyad rulers’ policies did not emphasize Arabic settlement in the country nor the conversion of its population, but rather acculturation, the introduction of the Arabic language and culture while protecting the local population against Bedouin raids that harmed farming. Islamization policies were hardly enforced with only a few exceptions, as during the time of the Caliph Omar II (717–720).

Acculturation (Arabization) advanced faster than Islamization. No significant change in the population composition took place and the population remained mostly Christian, with Jewish and Samaritan minorities.

Second Wave(Middle of the 10th Century — 11th Century)

The second wave came from the middle of the 10th century until the occupation of the country by the Crusaders in 1099. During these years Beduins (Arab nomad tribes) from the deserts of Arabia, Trans-jordan, Syrian desert, Sinai and Egypt invaded the country





and the Jerusalem area was Christian, and so was the western Galilee. The eastern Galilee was Jewish and the Cities along the shore were mixed, with a Christian majority.

The Population during Crusaders' Rule (1099 -1260)

The Crusaders massacred during the conquest of the country many Muslims and many others ran away. During the Crusaders rule the Northern part of the country, the Galliee, was settled by Christians in the west and Jews in the east with some Arabic enclaves.

The mountains of Samaria were settled by Arabs and Samaritans, but the mountains of Judea and around Jerusalem was mostly Christian, with some Arabic enclaves.

The Ayyubid rulers settled many Kurdish tribes in Palestine in order to secure the borders of their empire. Among the major Kurdish settlements in Palestine are city of Hebron, Tulkarm, Jerusalem and Nablus. There are also many Kurdish clans who came to Palestine at post-Ayyubid periods, especially during Ottomans.

In fact, 170,000 of the 500,000 residents of the Hebron area are of Kurdish descent. The Southern part of the country was mostly settled by Bedouins, who were nomads.

The Mamluks conquered most of the country from the Crusaders in 1260. They destroyed the cities along the shores of the Mediterranean Sea between 1260–1290. These cities were populated mostly by Christians of Syrian — Aramaic origin. Many were massacred or ran away before the Mameluk army arrived.

The cities along the shore, Acre, Arsuf, Jaffa, Ashdod, Ashkelon, except Gaza, remained deserted during the Mamluk Period.

The valleys of Jesreel and Beit Shean were densely populated by some Arab villages and nomad Bedouin. Also, there were few Arab villages along the shores of the Mediterranean Sea. The Christians population lost its majority around the 14th century .They were the majority of the population since 135 CE, first as pagans and as Christians



emigration of Christians, the Black Death, and the economic situation. A certain amount of Christians were forced to convert to Islam.

The Population during Ottomans' Rule (1516–1918)

The cities along the shores of the Mediterranean Sea remained deserted until the Ottoman government started to restore their ruins and invited Arabs and Muslims to settle there. This happened during the 18th- 19th centuries.

The population at the end of the 16th century grew to 206, 290, and the country remained mostly uncultivated and densely populated.

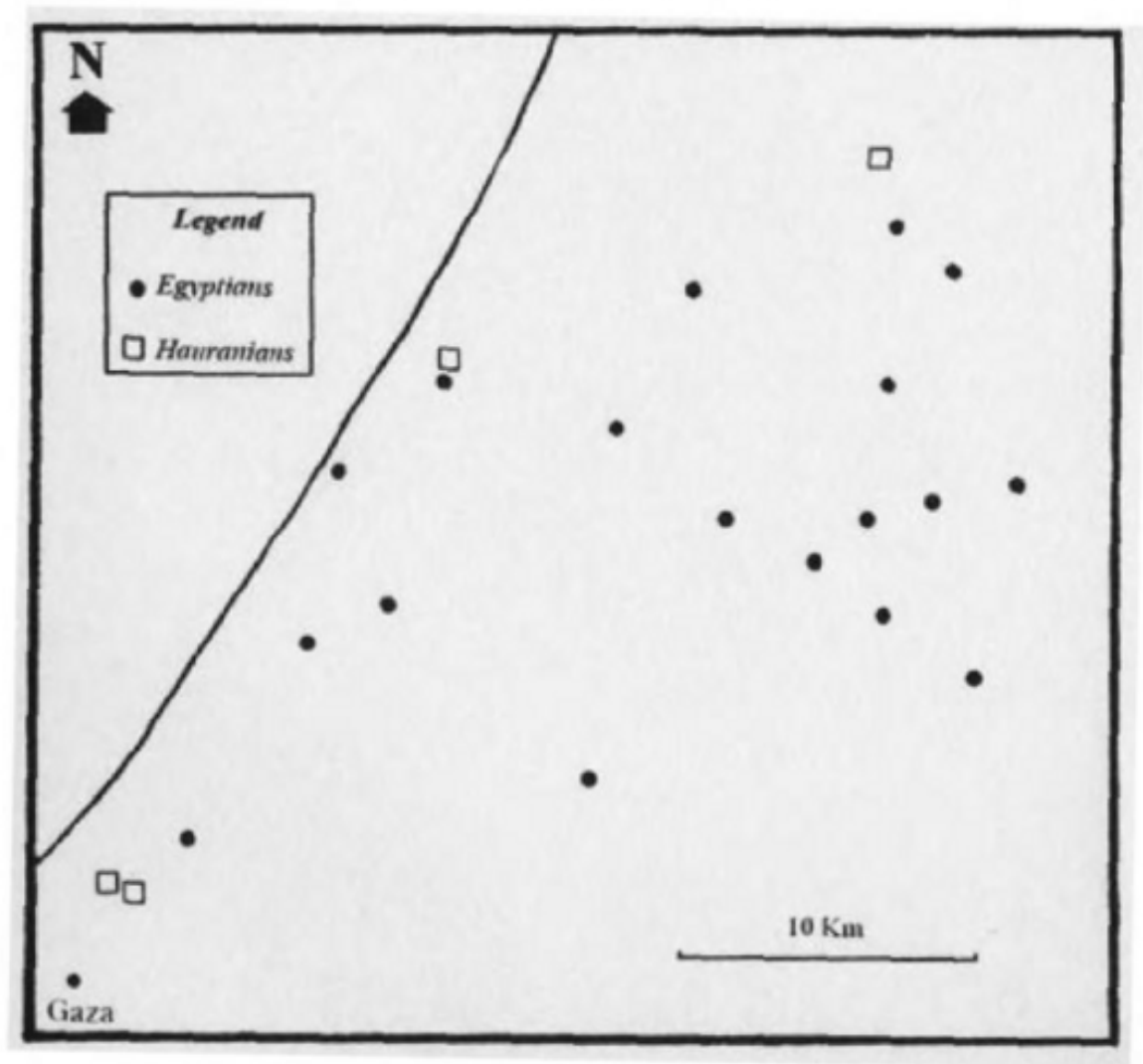
The Third Wave (16th — 17th Century)

The third wave began after the occupation of the country by the Ottomans during the 16th and 17th centuries. Arabs, mainly Bedouins, and Muslims from Lebanon, and Syria came to settle in the Galilee. According to the Ottoman census, by the end of the 16th century, there were about 206,290 people in the country of Western Jordan, mostly Muslims. But the economic situation and the lack of personal security caused people to leave, Muslims included.

During the 17th- 18th centuries the population became smaller and smaller. Tourists from Europe and the United States who visited the country described an uncultivated deserted land.

The Fourth Wave, Part One (1832–1917)





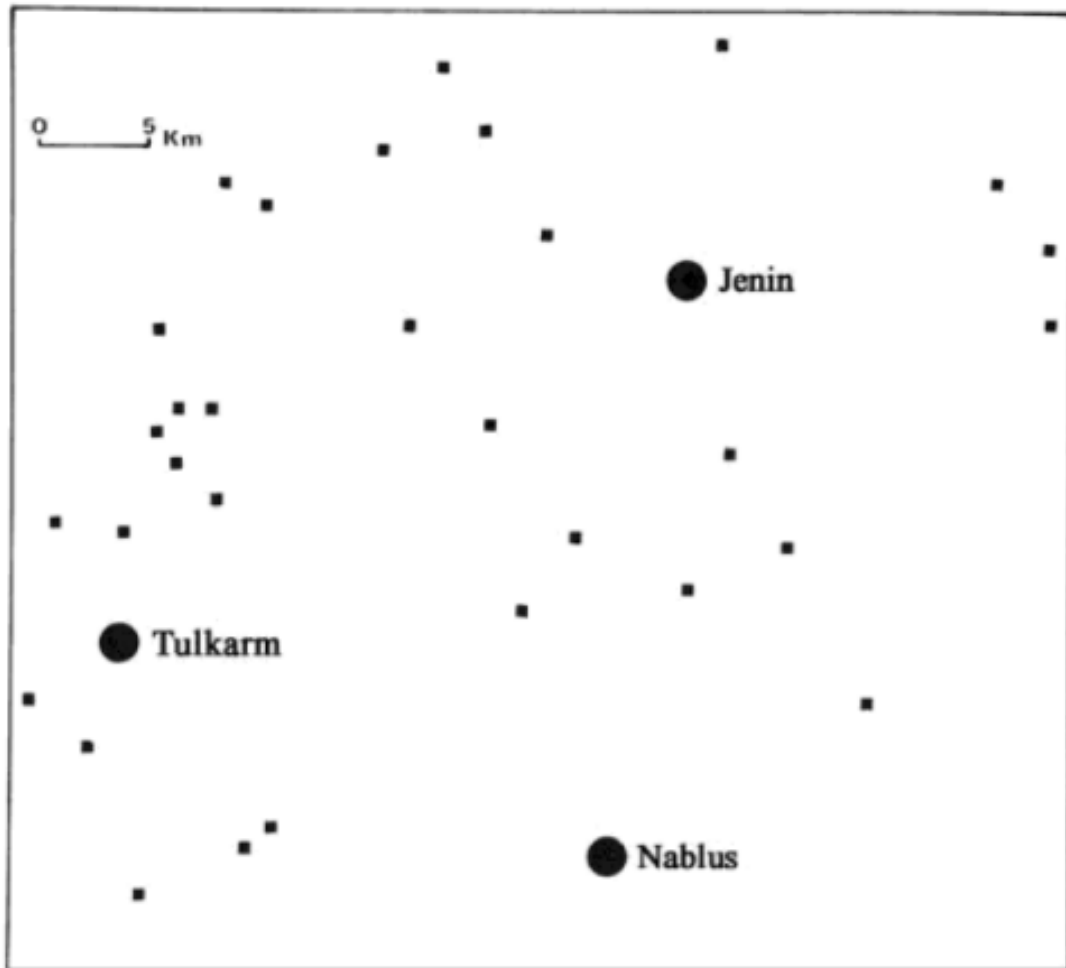
Source: Drawn by David Grossman.



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Map 2.4
Egyptian families in Samaria

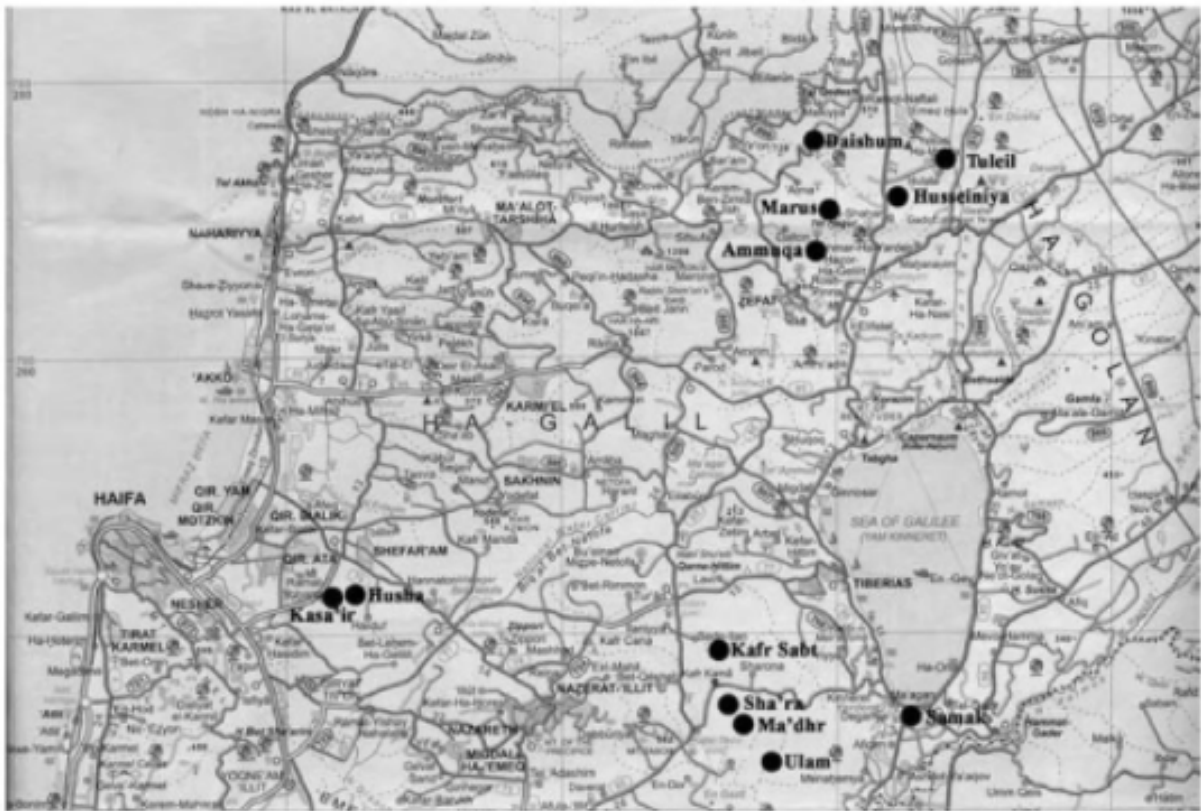


Source: Drawn by David Grossman.





Map 2.7
Algerian settlements: Distribution pattern



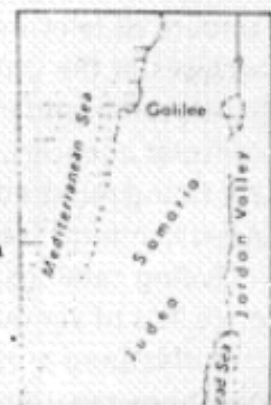
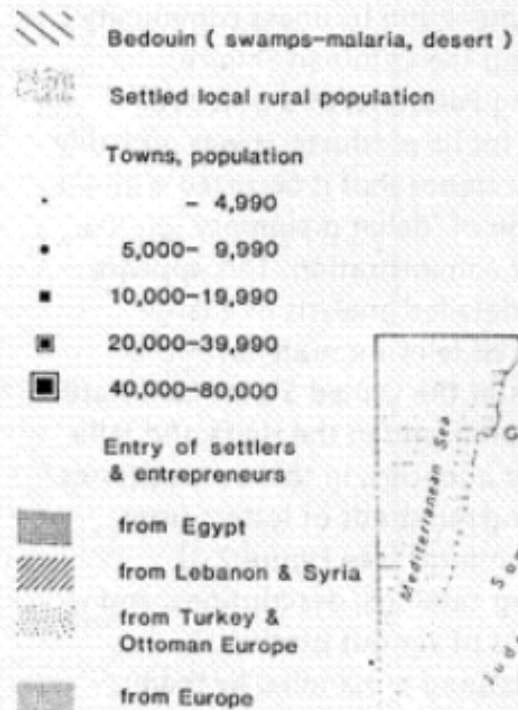
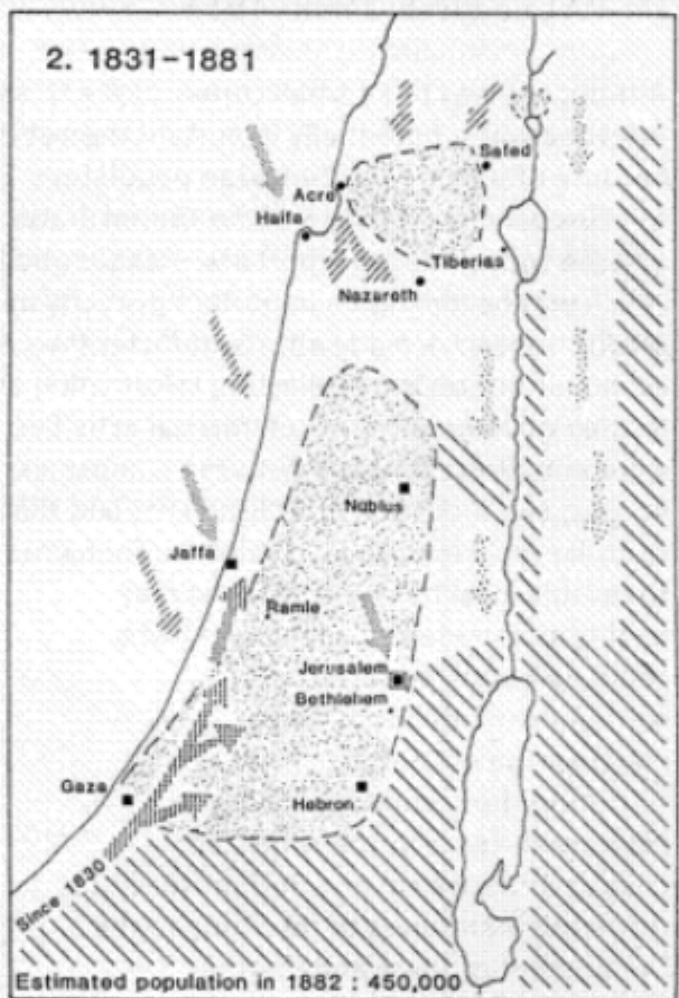
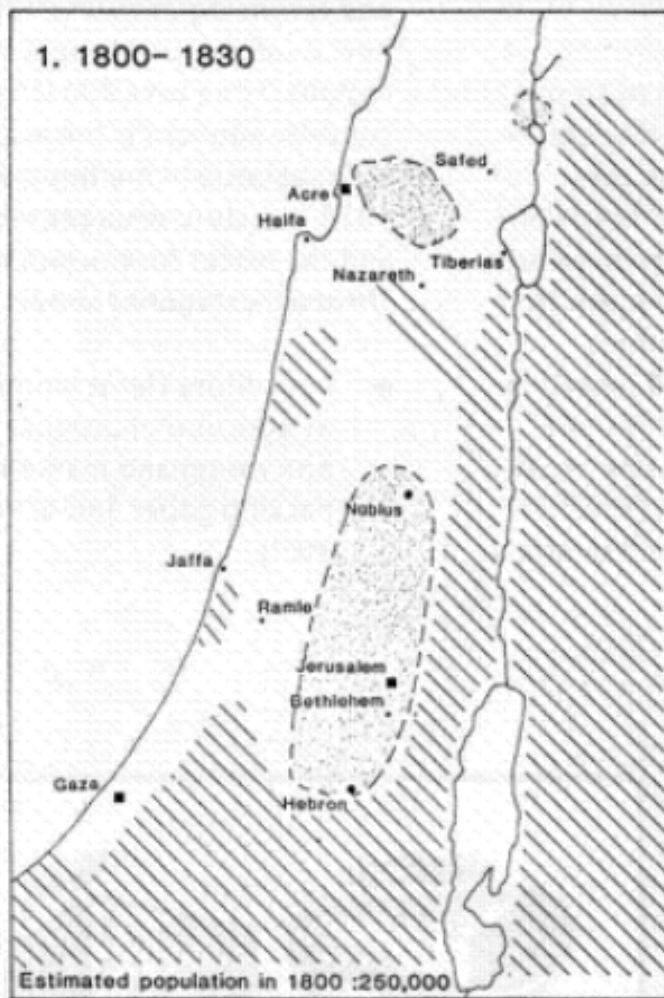
Source: Drawn with major alterations by David Grossman.

Settlement Of Egypt And Algerians source: [David Grossman](#)

The last and the largest wave came between around the middle- end of the 19th century and 1948 when Israel was established.

This wave started during the conquest of the country by the son of Muhammad Ali between 1832-1840. Egypt settled along the shore and the valleys, with about 100,000 Egyptian peasants (Another study of Egyptian immigration in the 19th century [here](#))

The Druze, Algerians, Turkmen, Circassians and Baha'is numbered 42,300. The Sudanese numbered about 500. The Bosnians numbered about 840. Lack of information on the Kurds and immigrants from other Arab countries.



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Bedouin Stages of Settlement in Late Ottoman and British Mandatory Palestine

Fred Gothhill found that according to a survey by the British Foundation in 1886, there were 7 tribal concentrations in Sanjak Acre that included 3,340 people. According to the survey and Derrick's findings, there were 13 Bedouin concentrations in the rest of the country, numbering 15,250. In the whole country at the end of the 19th century, there were 18,590 Bedouins. Ben-Arieh estimates that the estimated number of the nomadic Bedouin population was between 20,000 and 30,000. Historians Shmuel Avitsur and Yaakov Shavit estimate that in 1890 about 40,000 Bedouins migrated within the western part of Palestine and their number rose from 50,000 to 100,000 in 1915 and it is estimated that in 1914 they numbered about 100,000. Arabs and Muslims were invited by the Ottoman rulers to settle in the deserted country. The Zuabbian tribe was invited in 1873 from Irbid, Trans-Jordan to settle in the southern Galilee and the Izrael Valley. Muslims from Muslim countries such as Kurds and Circassians settled in the north.





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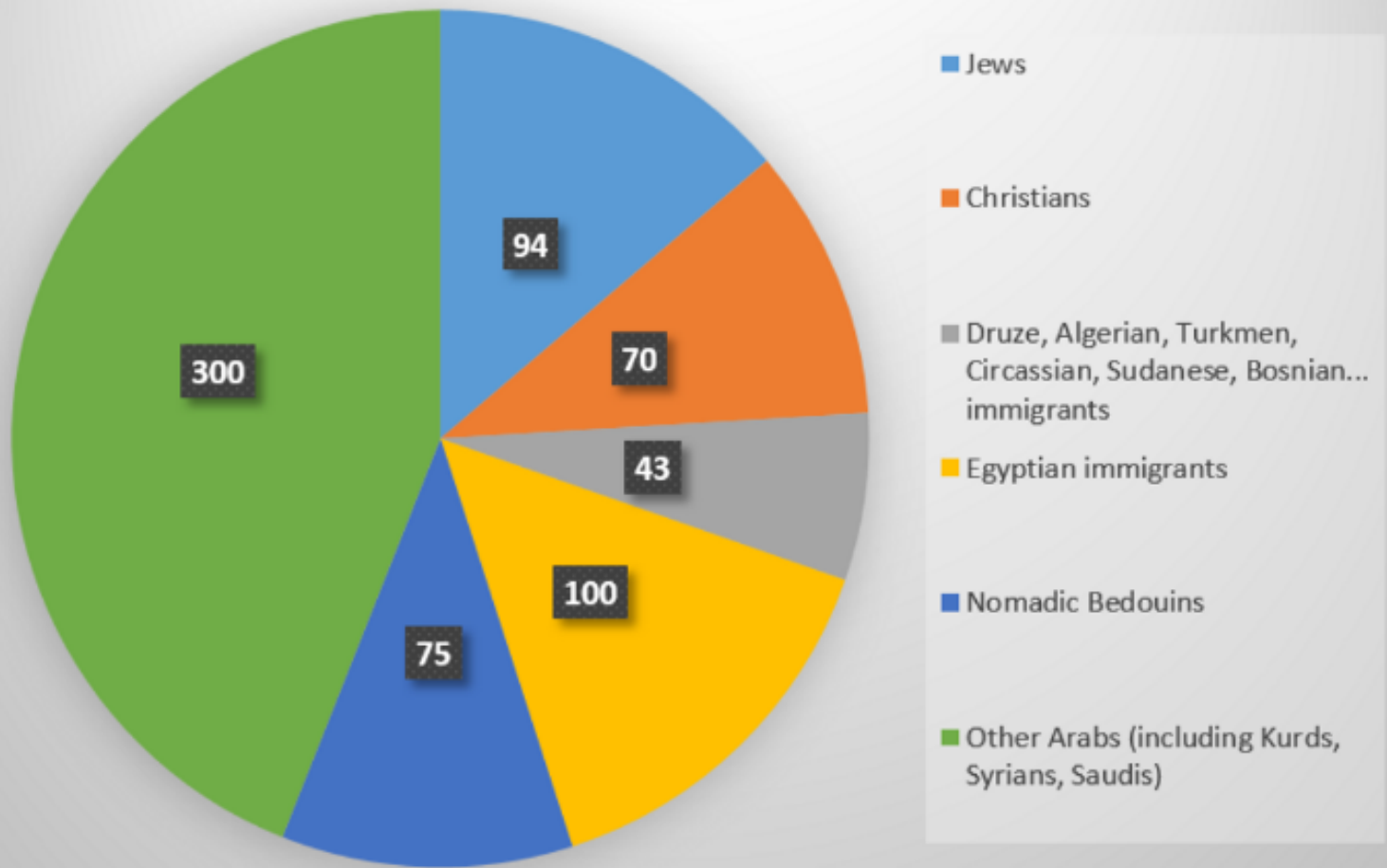
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Map of Newly Established Bedouin Villages, 1945

Palestine population in 1914 (in thousands)



Source: "When and How the Arabs and Muslims Immigrated to the Land of Israel" By [Rivka Shpak Lissak](#)

The Christian population includes various groups such as Armenians and Assyrians, there is still a lack of data on immigration such as Syrians, Kurds, etc ...)

The Fourth Wave, Part Two (1917–1948)

The second part of the largest wave came during the British Mandate occupation, between 1917 and 1948 when Israel was established. Arabs and Muslims from Arabic and Muslim countries entered illegally the country under the Turks and latter the British



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The Arab population of the south (between Jaffa and the Egyptian border) grew by more than 200% between 1917–1940s. About 35,000 Arabs from the Haurain, South Syria came looking for work.

From 1870 to 1948 the Arabic population grew by 270%. Even in Egypt, the Arab country with the highest birth rate, the rate was only 105%, which proves that a significant part of the Arabic population growth came from immigration. By 1921 when the British government performed its first census the number of Arabs and Muslims amounted to about 500,000. The 1931 British Census included about 30 different languages spoken by the Muslim population in Palestine. They were illegal immigrant workers from Arabic and Muslim countries. The high rate of children's deaths, low life expectancy and the lack of health services in the country made it impossible to reach 270% as a result of the birth rate.





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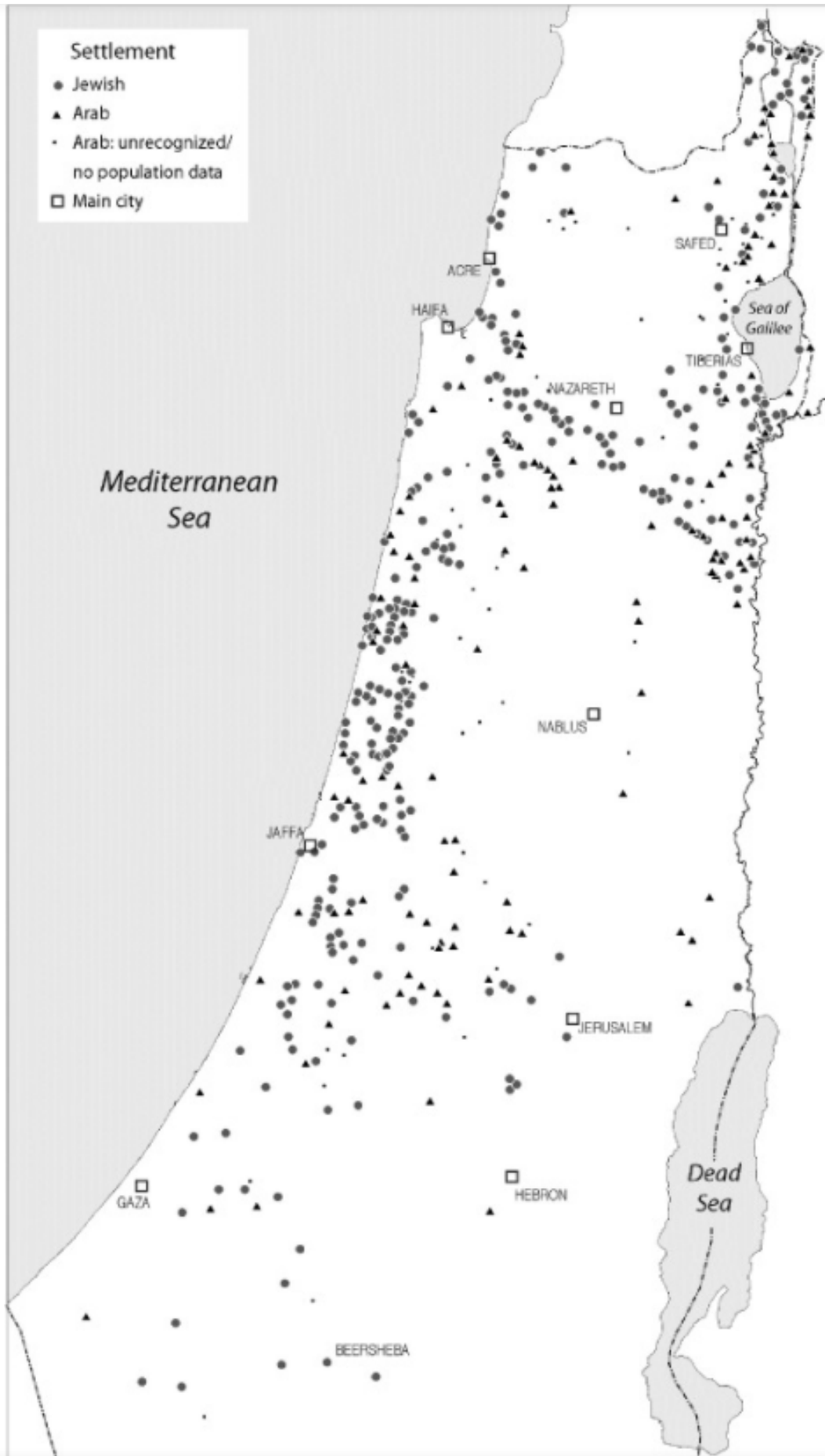
New Arab villages that appeared between 1871 and 1948: Population in 1945





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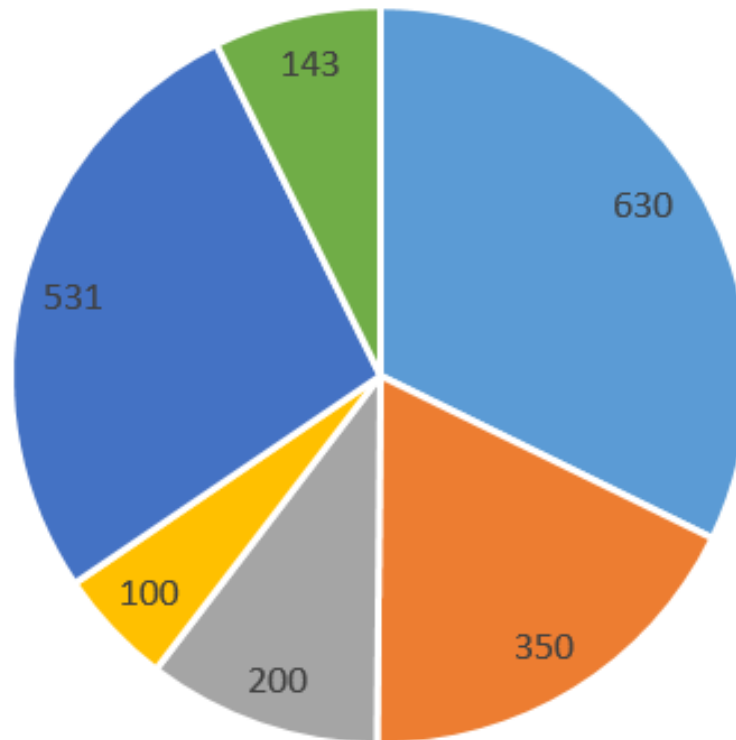
The majority of the new Arab villages (1871–1922) were established near Jewish settlements

In Palestinian census numbers from 1922 to 1931, produced by illegal immigration spurred by the development of the region's infrastructure and economy. One estimate sees some 37% of the increase in Palestinian population between 1922 and 1931, over 60,000 persons, having been the result of illegal immigration. Another study found that from 1932 to 1946, another 60,000 illegal male immigrants entered the country, with uncounted females imported as brides. These were in addition to the great influx of Arab workers from 1940 to 1945 in connection with the war effort.





The Population of the Land of Israel at the end of the British Mandate 1947 (In thousands)



- Jews
- Muslim immigrants and their descendants from the Ottoman periods
- Muslim immigrants and their descendants during the British Mandate
- Bedouin nomads
- Other Muslims (mainly immigrants from the 13th-18th centuries)
- Christians (including Armenians, European Assyrians ...)

Source: When and How the Arabs and Muslims Immigrated to the Land of Israel-Period of British Rule, 1918–1948

In summary, according to the data presented by Rivka Shpak Lissak, between one-third and one-half of Palestinians are in fact descendants of immigrants from 1830–1947 and





The origins of famous Palestinian families:

The Husseini clan:

According to the tradition, they immigrated in the 13th century, but according to other evidence, the family came to Palestine from Yamen in the 16th century and settled in the village Deir-Sudan (the dwelling of the black) near Ramallah from which they got their name al-Aswad.

The Nashashibi family:

The Nashashibis are thought to be of Kurdish-Circassian origin. first became notable and prominent in Jerusalem with the advent of Prince (of the army) Nasser al-Din al-Nashashibi who migrated (or led a military contingent?) to Jerusalem from Egypt in 1469 CE

The 'Alami family:

Came to Palestine from North Africa in the seventeenth century.

Maasarwe family:

origin of the Masarwa family from Egypt and its name is derived from an Egyptian plural.

Al-Qassam:

Illegal emigration from Syria to Haifa in 1921

In conclusion

There is no evidence that there was a mass conversion of Jews and Christians, but there is evidence of widespread immigration to Palestine during the particularly accelerated centuries of the 19th and 20th centuries.



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